
Process Monitoring of Impact

Update Study cases

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“Process Monitoring of Impact” approach has been tested in the framework of several ex-ante evaluation assignments for which the author has been commissioned by the respective programme authorities:

- Cross-border Co-operation Programmes:
 - Austria – Slovenia
 - Austria – Bavaria
 - Lake Constance (AT / DE / CH / LIE)
- Trans-national Co-operation Programmes:
 - Central European Space
 - South East European Space

In all of these ex-ante evaluations, **impact diagrams** were drawn up in collaboration with programme actors which allowed to **clarify the programme’s logic and “theory of action”**. This served to assess the **likeliness of achieving expected results and impacts** as well to identify suitable indicators (or assess the quality of those proposed by the programme authorities).

In three of these programmes (Austria – Slovenia, Lake Constance and Central European Space) **additional workshops** held with future Managing Authorities and JTS in order to discuss with them details on the implementation of the Process Monitoring of Impact” approach, notably the integration of suitable content in application forms and project reports.

In the other two programmes, these workshops are yet to be held.

In addition, start-up assistance was provided for three programmes upon specific requests expressed via the INTERACT Point Managing Transition:

- **Central Baltic Sea** (FI / EE / SWE): Two workshops were held with programme authorities and the JTS in order to clarify the programme’s “theory of action” and to identify suitable indicators.
- **RFO Hanse** (INTERREG IIIC): A meeting was held with project staff to review their current reporting system and to clarify the “theory of action” of a potential follow-up project which is yet to be prepared.
- **North West Europe**: Based on the current OP Draft, impact diagrams were drawn up and recommendations were provided concerning the programme’s indicator system. A meeting with the JTS concerning the modification of their reporting system is has been agreed but is yet to be held.

Last but not least, the “Process Monitoring of Impact” approach was also applied in the framework of an ex-post evaluation (Swiss participation in the INTERREG III Community Initiative). In the framework of this evaluation the approach was used to assess the impact of Swiss participation in 6 INTERREG programmes. To this end workshops were held for each of these programmes which involved focus groups representing programme authorities, implementation partners and beneficiaries.

The main results of these case studies as well as the experience gained will be summarised in the report commissioned by the INTERACT Point Managing Transition. Since some of these cases are still being **finalised the report is expected to be delivered by the end of May 2007**.

Preliminary findings

However, some **preliminary findings** can already be drawn at this stage concerning the utility of the approach and the main problems encountered during its application:

- The **impact diagrams** have proven an **effective tool** for clarifying / focusing a programmes logic and to arrive at a **joint understanding** on expected effects and the ways to achieve them. Based on information contained in the Draft OPs, initial versions of these diagrams were drawn up by the evaluators and validated during one or two sessions of the programming group (or drafting teams).
- The impact diagrams were predominantly established at the **level of Priorities**, in some cases also at the **level of Areas of Intervention**. They show the **likely linkages between outputs, results and impacts**, in addition assumptions were formulated how outputs will lead to results. Thus **the core impact mechanisms** have been identified, i.e. the expected contributions of Activity Fields and project types towards the achievement of results and impacts.
- The impact diagrams have resulted in **improved descriptions of strategies / priorities and in clearer ideas about the types of outputs (=projects)** to be funded by the programme. And they were successfully **used to identify suitable (output and result) indicators**, to check the utility of proposed indicator systems to highlight which programme effects do not lend themselves for being monitored by means of quantifiable indicators.
- Yet, observing whether the process assumptions contained in the impact diagrams actually take place requires that **corresponding information is collected via applications, reports or contacts with project owners**. Full and coherent integration of these aspects **in the entire management cycle** proved to be the main problem encountered during implementation so far. This was also due to the fact that during the programming phase these aspects were considered too early by programme authorities, who neither had time nor resources for these issues during the programme preparation. It remains to be seen whether the workshops which are now being held after the programmes have been submitted can overcome these obstacles.

The main advantage of the “Process Monitoring of Impact” approach is the **joint focus of all involved actors** on achieving **intended results – not outputs or indicators!** And there are additional advantages for specific stakeholders: For programme actors:

- **Joint orientation** for future project assessment and selection
- **Early information on likely achievement** of results For project owners:
- **Simplified, standardised reporting**, streamlined applications
- **More flexibility during implementation** (accountable for results)
- For Evaluators:
- Evaluation questions for on-going / ex-post (assumptions / linkages)
- Standardised reports facilitate analysing / processing of information

Process Monitoring of Impacts **leads to the establishment of a comprehensive Management Information System**, which combines existing elements and procedures in an interconnected manner: Electronic Monitoring Systems, applications, reports, contacts with applicants, project assessment, evaluation. The innovation therefore lies not in the individual elements, but in their new and creative combination. Thus Process Monitoring of Impacts essentially consists in a coherent framework for knowledge management at programme level.